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CARDIN, MIKULSKI PRAISE 7-YEAR BAN ON DRILLING OFF ATLANTIC COAST, URGE PERMANENT FIX

Washington, DC – **U.S. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin and Barbara A. Mikulski (Both D-MD)** lauded today's announcement by the Obama Administration that it would ban oil drilling off the Atlantic Coast through 2017. The senators have repeatedly called for a permanent prohibition on offshore drilling off the Atlantic Coast, particularly in areas too environmentally sensitive or vital to our national defense.

"The Mid-Atlantic is just too environmentally sensitive for drilling. I applaud President Obama and Secretary Salazar for making the right decision to prohibit oil drilling off the Atlantic Coast," **said Senator Cardin, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.**

"Drilling off the Virginia coast would have brought with it tremendous risks for our coastal economy and the future of the Chesapeake Bay, a national environmental treasure. I urge President Obama to make permanent today's announcement and help turn our nation's efforts to developing clean energy solutions that will create American jobs, fuel American business, strengthen our national security by ending our dependence on foreign energy, and protecting our precious natural resources."

"President Obama did the right thing today by deciding not to allow offshore drilling off our Atlantic coast. I am absolutely opposed to offshore drilling and always will be," **Senator Mikulski said.** "Offshore drilling can devastate the environment, harming our unique and fragile coastline and wreaking havoc on the coastal communities whose economies rely heavily on tourism. As we saw after the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico earlier this year, when oil starts to leak it knows no boundaries. I will never stop fighting to protect our beaches, our precious waters and our tourism economy."

On March 31, President Obama announced that he planned to open the Atlantic Coast to oil and gas drilling in an area known as Lease Sale 220. This wedge-shaped area covers 2.9 million acres off the coast of Virginia. The western edge of Lease Sale 220 sits 50 miles due east of the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay and 60 miles from the Maryland border and Assateague Island National Seashore. Just two months later, after continued pressure from Mid-Atlantic Senators, President Obama cancelled the planned lease sale for this sensitive area. Today's announcement closes the door on any such lease sales through 2017.

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